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Is Complex Music Socially Significant? Doing Ethnomusicology in South Asia

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Résumé de l'article

In this article, four cases of ethnomusicological research on South Asian music
are presented to substantiate the social essentiality (*Wesentlichkeit*) of music,
and therefore the complementary role of a socially-grounded approach to
studying complex musical traditions. Historiographically, it is argued that this
social orientation progresses logically from, and is in keeping with, the growing
cosmopolitan reality of musical scholarship and of music itself.
Ethnomusicology draws resourcefully from its rich, inter-disciplinary heritage
of musicology, music theory, anthropology, and area studies to yield tools of
musical description and analysis that are culturally appropriate,
culture-specific and yet cross-cultural, this paving a foundation for a truly
comparative—and "Adlerian"— musicology.

IS COMPLEX MUSIC SOCIALLY SIGNIFICANT? DOING ETHNOMUSICOLOGY IN SOUTH ASIA

Regula Burckhardt Qureshi

This paper has a dual purpose: to highlight significant social content within the complex musical traditions of South Asian elite culture and to relate this explicitly ethnomusicological project to the context of "mainstream" Western musicology.[1] In a world of communicative interpenetration and acknowledged pluralism—and of increasing Western domination—the conversation of those who think about music has been quite naturally assuming global dimensions, if only in the acknowledgement implied by the addition of the term "Western" to the titles of some music textbooks.[2] To the increasingly cosmopolitan reality of musical scholarship and of music itself, ethnomusicology[3] brings a commitment to culture-specific music studies which offer an explicitly cross-cultural foundation for a truly comparative musicology.[4]

Music and Area Study

Although situated within the academic domain of music, ethnomusicology also engages with the entirely different disciplinal frame of area studies. Such involvement, however, tends to be individual rather than institutional, and joint conversations across the two academic constituencies of music and area studies

have been sporadic at most. Obvious reasons are the geographic and cultural differences between the rather solitary field of musicology on one side and the highly interdisciplinary agglomerates of area studies on the other. In addition, there is a peculiarly Western notion of music as deeply interior and outside the grasp of mere intellect. Placed within both worlds, ethnomusicologists are in a position to interpret these geographic and cultural differences more broadly as challenges, starting with an exploration of each other's premises, including those of ethnomusicology itself.

South Asian Area Studies are comprehensively conceived around the concept of culture, in the "humanities sense" of cultural heritage as well as the "social science sense" of lifeways. They include in their scope both elite and folk orientations, categories reinforced in South Asia by the Redfieldian concepts of Great and Little Tradition.[5] More recently, a critical examination of the scholarship is introducing post-Orientalist issues to the entire field. Among cultural idioms and materials, languages and literature take a central place; music, however, tends to be marginalized, mainly as an adjunct to visually accessible arts or to social and religious themes. Because of a deep-seated Western notion that music is a domain accessible only to specialists, South Asianists—like most anthropologists—have yet to be persuaded that music is profoundly significant within the life of human communities.[6]

Musicology, the "home" discipline for nearly all ethnomusicologists, has been in the process of expanding and refining its unitary Western historical focus, moving toward what one might call "historical relativism," consciously acknowledging the cultural integrity of historical periods as observed from the vantage point of the historian. Newcomb, Powers, and Treitler exemplify this trend in their historical work.[7] More explicitly, Jeffery calls for an ethnomusicologically guided historical musicology, while Tomlinson lays the theoretical groundwork for a conception of cultural context or "archaeology" of music history.[8] At the same time, there is among some musicologists an understandable reluctance to face the disquieting prospect of substituting cul-

5 Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).
6 Interestingly, this stricture does not extend to the visual arts.
7 Anthony Newcomb, *The Madrigal and Ferrara, 1579–1597*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Harold Powers, "Tonal Types and Modal Categories in Renaissance Polyphony," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34, no. 3 (1981): 429–70; and Leo Treitler, "Reading and Singing: On the Genesis of Occidental Music Writing," *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 137–210.
8 Peter Jeffery, *Re-envisioning Past Musical Cultures: Ethnomusicology in the Study of Gregorian Chant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); also Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1972).

tural relativity for received Western humanistic premises of preeminence for the Western arts.

Ethnomusicology and Social Relevance

Ethnomusicologists have lived with canon-less uncertainty since the discipline's inception; their search for an expanded research paradigm for music[9] has centered on the explicitly social-contextual perspective of anthropology with its systematic application of a holistic frame of reference.[10] This calls for examining a society's music making in relation to all societal domains, including subsistence and economy, social organisation, and ideology and belief system. In small-scale societies, holistic studies have resulted in finely integrated portraits of musical life, if not of musical idioms.[11]

A second facet of the anthropological approach in ethnomusicology is a commitment to the "ethnographic method," a search for a culturally appropriate understanding of music and music-makers realized through intensive, yet self-conscious participation and observation, or "field work." This process is informed by several crucial distinctions: (1) between norm and practice, (2) between verbal report and action, and (3) between the culture's own ("emic") and the analyst's ("etic") categories of interpretation.

For an ethnographically appropriate analysis of musical sound, anthropology offers the ethnomusicologist principles derived from structural linguistics: the systematic identification of meaningful sound units and rules for their combination, leading toward the establishment of a "grammar" of a culture's musical language. Applied as an intellectual discipline to music or context, the anthropological framework aims at clarity of premise and thereby at replicability, both relevant for historical as well as for contemporary research.

A special contribution ethnomusicologists themselves have made to the ethnographic study of music is the active learning of musical practice with the goal of becoming "bi-musical."[12] Such study has not only expanded culture-specific musical competence[13] but has also expanded the range of our general

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9 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
10 Foundational debates within the journal *Ethnomusicology* in the 1970s provide an instructive record.
11 Anthony Seeger, *Why Suya Sing: A Musical Anthropology of an Amazonian People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics and Song in Kaluli Expression* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1982).
12 Mantle Hood, "The Challenge of Bi-Musicality," *Ethnomusicology* 4, no. 2 (1960): 55–59.
13 James Kippen, *The Tabla of Lucknow: A Cultural Analysis of a Musical Tradition*, Cambridge Studies in Ethnomusicology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

musical understanding, for example of rhythm.[14] In addition, the humbling experience of being a beginning music student forms a salutary counterbalance to the hegemonic character of the scholarly engagement of the West with the Rest.[15]

Beyond these essentially instrumental applications of anthropology, its social science orientation also includes the explicit engagement with fundamental questions of meaning, something musicology did in the past and is only beginning to do again: what makes music essential to human beings, given that no society lives without it?

Ethnomusicologists have addressed questions of social meaning by drawing on both functionalist and structuralist paradigms from anthropology. Since the foundation for functionalist interpretations was laid by Merriam[16] and re-articulated by Blacking,[17] the functionalist paradigm has dominated ethnomusicological interpretation in diverse forms, characterized by a focus on internal coherence and functional logic within musical-social systems. Structuralism, while promising in its capacity to incorporate musical sound structure, has per se offered limited explanatory power beyond correlating binary oppositions.[18]

A recent interpretational stance, motivated by Marxist and Critical Theory, is putting traditional analysis into question, responding to the obvious geographic and political-technological disruption of traditional social systems and cultural practices. In this context an overarching issue of concern is cultural and social survival in the face of domination; this puts the focus on the central role music plays in articulating identity of nations, communities, subcultures, social classes, and of individuals within them. From this perspective, the task of ethnomusicology consists of viewing the many musics competing within our world as voices of cultural identity, even survival, even while being threatened by changing conditions.[19]

14 Ruth M. Stone, "In Search of Time in African Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 7 (1985): 139–48.

15 Christopher A. Waterman, *Juju: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music*, Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); and Stephen Blum, "Response to the Symposium Papers: Commentary," *Ethnomusicology* 34, no. 3 (1990): 413–21.

16 Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

17 John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973).

18 Anthony Seeger, "Sing for Your Sister: The Structure and Performance of Suya Akia," in Norma McLeod and Marcia Herndon, eds., *The Ethnography of Musical Performance* (Norwood: Norwood Editions, 1980): 7–42.

19 Thomas Turino, "Structure, Context and Strategy in Musical Ethnography," *Ethnomusicology* 34, no. 3 (1990): 399–412; and Jocelyne Guilbault, "Ethnomusicology and the Study of Music in the Caribbean," *Studies in Third World Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, in press).

Today, an orientation toward social relevance is not unique to ethnomusicology. Sociologists studying popular music as well as new "alternative" musicologists[20] are engaging with the issue of the social embeddedness and significance of music in a "post-modern" vein of reflexivity which brings the study of music into the mainstream of contemporary critical and creative thinking. Effectively formulated in the voice of musically literate European social scientists, their premise of the social essentiality (*Wesentlichkeit*) of music can be outlined in the following terms.

The production of music is a tool for the creation and consolidation of community; every code of music is rooted in ideologies and technologies of its age and at the same time produces them. A code of music simulates accepted roles of society, and thus it reconciles people with the social order. Music is both text and enactment, both valued *Kulturgut* and flexible idiom for articulating difference. Music structures difference, and at the same time it makes audible contradiction: the quest for difference. Performance is also a dialectical confrontation with the course of time, past time is produced, heard and exchanged, and futures are confronted. Music thus records the simultaneity of conflicting orders in a society, for musical codes arise from and reflect shared norms and "strategies" arising from *habitus*, but these shared norms are articulated as individualized practices or "tactics" occurring in historically specific moments,[21] hence the claim that "change is inscribed in [music] faster than it transforms society."[22] These are as yet largely theoretically postulated challenges for an explicitly social orientation in the study of music, ethnomusicological or otherwise. The crucial question that arises from such a "theory" relates to "method" and concerns validation: the central problematic of all social claims for music has been to provide *musical* evidence beyond broad homologies for the claimed semantic reference which gives music the power to both represent social meaning and create it. Innovative concepts like "iconicity of style"[23] are

20 Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, eds., *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); John Shepherd, ed., "Alternative Musicologies/Les Musicologies Alternatives," special issue of the *Canadian University Music Review*, no. 10/2 (1990); and Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

21 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, transl. by Richard Nice, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); and Thomas Turino, "Structure, Context and Strategy in Musical Ethnography," *Ethnomusicology* 34, no. 3 (1990): 399–412.

22 Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, transl. by B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

23 Steven Feld, "Aesthetics as Iconicity of Style, or 'Lift-up-over Sounding: Getting into the Kaluli Groove," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 20, no. 1 (1988): 74–113.

suggestive but too totalizing for dealing with the multiplicity of successive sounds and messages that music is capable of conveying.

Western music theory offers highly specific methods for analysing musical utterances, but it has left little room for incorporating contextual links, to the extent of eliminating even the text of vocal music from its analytical frame.[24] This priority itself clearly has contextual antecedents: musicology's historically conditioned embracing of two central nineteenth-century concepts, that of "absolute music" as musical sound severed from its context, and that of the "musical art work" as an artifact severed from its creators.[25]

Ethnomusicologists have variously adapted and ignored categories and procedures of Western music theory, for in the salutary, if unsettling, absence of an established canon, they have tended to develop their methodologies inductively through their engagement with the music of a particular society and its particular social and musical character. The nature of both the society and its music have therefore a direct bearing on the issues and insights that emerge from such engagement. For instance, studies of small-scale hunting-gathering and horticultural societies have shown structural connections between music and kinship and gender relations,[26] engagement with art music in socially and musically stratified societies has expanded knowledge of musical transmission and aesthetics,[27] while work on popular music produced under industrial capitalism brings into focus processes of musical acculturation and musically encoded social and technological change.[28]

To address the challenge of decoding the contextual significance of musical sound in more musically specific ways becomes possible in cultures that offer an analyzable musical language which is performed in culturally bounded, observ-

24 Ian Bent, *Analysis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), and Claude Palisca, "Theory," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 18:741.

25 Connected with this—and reflected in the disciplinal separation of (historical) musicology and music theory—is the North American tendency to consider the contextual information generated by music historians as separate from the analysis of music sound.

26 Michael Asch, *Kinship and the Drum Dance in a Northern Dene Community* Circumpolar Research Series (Edmonton: Boreal Institute for Northern Studies, 1988); Anthony Seeger, *Why Suya Sing*; and Marina Roseman, "The Social Structuring of Sound: The Temiar of Peninsula Malaysia," *Ethnomusicology* 28, no. 3 (1984): 411–45.

27 Daniel M. Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980); and Judith Becker and Alton Becker, "A Musical Icon: Power and Meaning in Javanese Gamelan Music," in Wendy Steiner, ed.,*The Sign in Music and Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981): 203–15.

28 Peter Manuel,*Popular Musics of the Non-Western World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); John Shepherd, ed., "Alternative Musicologies," *Canadian University Music Review*; and Roger Wallis and Krister Malm, *Big Sounds from Small Peoples: The Music Industry in Small Countries* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1984).

able social contexts. South Asia's musical world is a composite of such musical cultures. Its diverse but highly canonical art music tradition offers culturally appropriate tools of musical description and analysis. At the same time, this music can be apprehended or "read" only in performance, because the process of creating even classical music remains oral, despite an ancient tradition of music writing. To learn Indian music means perforce to experience how it is produced and received in its living context.

Indian Music: Contextual Dimensions

All Indian performances, including those of art music, are evident as socially grounded even while ideologically referenced and individually enacted. Indeed, as was first noted by Milton Singer,[29] South Asia is particularly rich in a myriad of specific musical occasions, idioms and genres that are intimately linked to regions, religious communities and social groups. Given the great prevalence of performance specialists, performance idioms themselves are characterized by artistry and an aesthetic of complexity which is supported by the highest degree of professionalisation. These idioms are predominantly vocal with either or both rhythmic and melodic instrumental accompaniment; a kinetic dimension is often an integral part of the idiom, ranging from gesture or mime to acting or dancing. The Indian term *sangit* embodies this comprehensive conception of "music": it encompasses vocal and instrumental music together with dance.

The structural and semantic richness of *sangit* presents a special challenge to the student of performance. Not surprisingly, India has been attracting "idioms specialists" who are willing to immerse themselves in the musical, literary, or gestic dimensions of India's musical languages. Involvement with idiom, repertoire and competence have, however, tended to result in a neglect of the social nature of the communicative process they serve.

A fact of special significance which probably renders Indian music unique among non-Western art musics is that Indian music has essentially not been appropriated by Western colonial and post-colonial domination. This may have been one of the reasons why already in its early phase the nationalist movement coopted art music and incorporated it into middle-class culture as a central icon of Indian national identity.[30] Gradually, a network of public institutions was

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29 Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes*, parts 2 and 3 (New York: Prager, 1972). Singer's India-derived concept of "cultural performance" has been widely applied. For example, Marcia Herndon, "The Cherokee Ballgame Cycle: An Ethnomusicologist's View," *Ethnomusicology* 15, no. 3: 339–52.

30 Susheela Misra, *Music Makers of the Bhatkhande College of Hindustani Music* (Calcutta: Sangeet Research Academy, 1985); Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, "Whose Music? Sources and

built, supporting and controlling the continuing definition, production, dissemination, and reproduction of the musical heritage. An integral part of this development is Indian musicology and music theory, with its well-established journals and monograph publications. Grounded in a lineage of classical Sanskrit treatises, Indian musical scholarship is today written largely in English and in contemporary Indian languages, especially those with a sizable music-oriented readership: mainly Mahrati, Tamil, Bengali, Hindi and Telugu. Western writings intermingle in this literature, reflecting within India an eclectic approach to interpretation as well as a growing sense of internationalisation.

To date, Indian music has attracted a cumulative enterprise of both performance study and scholarship, making available an increasing pool of specific musical information and interpretations, tools and idioms of performance, performances processes, but also the social world of music makers, patrons and audiences. What India offers the Western music scholar is an analogous but alternative, yet accessible musical-social system which is potentially relevant as a stimulant for new insights for the socially grounded study, especially that of complex music.

The four examples that follow offer instances of such insights, each resulting from an encounter with a specific aspect of complex music in South Asia. All four belong to the cultural traditions of North Indian, or Hindustani, music which extends across Northern India as well as Pakistan, and to the Indo-Aryan language areas of the sub-continent. In distinction to the Southern, or Carnatic, dialect of the "Great Tradition" of Indian Music, North Indian music is characterized, in a cultural sense, by a history of Muslim-Persian accretions, by the socially pervasive impact of feudal patronage, and musically by a strong emphasis on improvisation. Within the limits of this article, I shall try to sketch the striking social-musical connection within each encounter, and also to convey its particular flavour.

Encounter 1. Qawwali, the Music of Indic Sufism: Extra-Musical Meaning in Musical Sound.

Qawwali is a distinct genre within the orbit of the "light-classical" category of North Indian Music – professionalized music that loosely follows principles of rhythmic cycles (tala) and melodic types (raga), and also includes some improvi-

Contexts in Indic Musicology," in Bruno Nettl and Philip V. Bohlman, eds., *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology*, Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 152–68; and Charles Capwell, "Marginality and Musicology in Nineteenth-Century Calcutta, the Case of Sourindro Mohun Tagore," in *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music*, 228–43.

sation within a framework of a composed song. The song structure consists of contrasting sections that correspond entirely to those of classical raga genres: a higher pitched *antara* and a tonic-oriented, lower pitched *asthayi*. But qawwali is not only a musical genre, it is a religious event with a spiritual purpose to arouse the emotion of mystic love, to deepen spiritual insight, and to unite the soul with the Beloved. This is a spiritual concert where listening is a means of worship, a path to individual spiritual advancement. The musical form of qawwali is generated in response to this purpose. In the Sufi assembly qawwali musicians shape their melody in every performance through a unique dialogue between performers and listeners, by means of special melodic and rhythmic features that carry religious and social meaning. What sustains this dialogue is ideational: a shared set of deeply-held beliefs that encompasses music, its capacity to carry religious meaning, and its essential role in generating the mystical experience.

What distinguishes qawwali from other "light classical" genres are musical features that directly serve its religious purpose. Sufi participants taught me to identify three types of "distinctive features": (1) rhythm (forcefully accentuated drum beat patterns on the barrel-shaped *dholak* and zesty accents executed by sharp handclapping), which articulates the Sufi listeners' continuous inner recitation of God's name in *dhikr* or "remembrance," (2) texture and articulation (responsorial singing patterns that establish and maintain the primacy and continuity of the song's verbal message; thus, the qawwali text uninterrupted and forcefully amplified, but never replaced by, the "pure music" of melodic and rhythmic accompaniment; full-throated singing and a sharply demarcated enunciation place continuous emphasis on the phonetic shape of the Sufi text), and (3) formal and melodic structure. Most important is the communication of the text's meaning to the Sufi listener. Different patterns of repetition permit the singer to emphasize salient portions of the poem: verse lines, phrases, and words. Such textual units are shaped melodically to denote different structural units. These, and procedures resembling first and second endings, permit flexible combinations to shape the song in ways appropriate to the spiritual needs of individual Sufis in the audience. In addition, the performer chooses melodic and rhythmic settings for a song in response to elite or popular preference among his listeners.

Example 1 offers a brief experience of this complex interaction, transcribed and annotated from a videotaped assembly of Sufi devotees.

How *qawwali* music creates, and is created by, religious experience became vividly real during a unique and intimate late-night *qawwali* session, where our Sufi's spiritual arousal culminated in a state of ecstasy (*hal*). The performer variously shaped the song to serve this ecstasy but also to engage other listeners in response to their spiritual inclination as well as his own material needs. Performance thus emerges simultaneously as social and musical action created

Example 1: Qawwali interaction: excerpt from a Sufi Assembly

(Performers Meraj Iqbal Ahmad and Babu Haya's Disciples, Nizamuddin Shrine, New Delhi, 26 April 1976. Transcribed from a personal recording accessible in the Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi).

Musical Setting (Strophic):

1. Sukh nin-da se ak-hi yan   kho-la za-ra kha gha-flat Rab se   dhya-na la-ga

orig. tonic: 'c'
time cycle: kahrva
(transcribed as 8/8)
dholak and harmonium
accompany throughout

Initial section is set in high register (*cf. antarā* of classical Indian music)

2. Yeh pri-ta kar an kī - rī ta na hin,   Ra-ba jā - ga-ta hai tū   so-wa-ta hai

Concluding section is set in low register (*cf. asthāyī* of classical Indian music)

Section endings *ascend* to signal repeat of the same section, reiterating its message (*cf.* Western class 'first ending')
Section endings *descend* to signal advent of the following section, with a new message to come (*cf.* Western classical 'second ending').

Verse (Original Hindi and Translation):

Sukh nīnd kī akhiyān khol zarā kho ghaflat Rab se dhyān lagā
Yeh prīt karan kī rīt nahin, Rab jāgat hai tū sowat hai.

Open your eyes from easy sleep; become conscious and focus on God
This is not the way of loving: God is awake, yet you are asleep.

Inserted Line (interrupted):   Ajab-e-junūn-e-ulfat ...
                              The wondrous madness-of-love ...

Performance Segment:

The two performers sing responsorially, with an open-throated voice quality and clear

verbal enunciation; they accompany themselves on the harmonium (portable reed organ) and dholak (hand-struck two-headed barrel-drum); a third singer joins later, adding handclaps. The audience, an intimate circle of spiritually related Sufis, includes a spiritual leader, a senior Sufi of Nizamuddin's lineage, and a prosperous literary visitor. An elderly disciple, near-ecstatic, has moved to the center of the circle; all participants are seated on the floor as is customary.

1a. A - he: Sukh nīn - də si a khi - yān kho - lə za - rā

Song Text: "Hark! Open your eyes from easy sleep"
Performers: After several repeats of the opening line of the verse, the lead singer initiates its final statement. To alert listeners he introduces the line with the Persian *ahe* ("hark") and intensifies the delivery by raising the pitch of the *antarā* tune by a major second.
Audience: The ecstatic disciple, who has risen on his knees, grasps his chest with emotion.

1b. Kho gha - flat Rab se dhyān la gā

Song Text: "Become conscious and focus on God"
Performers: Descending conclusion of melody indicates completion of first verse line and impending continuation
Audience: Listeners become alert and expectant, including ecstatic disciple

2a. Yeh prī - tə ka ran kī rī - tə na hīn,Yeh prī - tə karan ki rī - tə na hin

Song Text: "This is not the way of living, This is not the way of loving;"
Performers: Lead singer begins to expand the salient conclusion of the verse by repeating each half
Audience: Several listeners show a surge of emotion by shaking heads or raising right arm. Ecstatic disciple utters a muffled cry

2b. Ra bə jā - ga - tə hai tū so wa - tə hai Raba jā - ga - tə hai tū sowa - tə hai, Ra ba jā - ga tə hai tū so - wa - tə hai

Song Text: "God is awake yet you are asleep, God is awake yet you are asleep, God is awake yet you are asleep"
Performers: Drummer punctuates arrival of verse climax with accents to sustain emotional response in audience

Audience: Ecstatic disciple shows more intense spiritual arousal, turning on his knees and bowing down in reverence

2a.   Yeh   pri - tə ka ran kī   rīt na hin. Yeh   prī- tə ka ran kī   rī - tə na hin. Yeh   prī- tə ka ran kī   n̄ - tə na hin

Song Text: "This is not the way of loving, This is not the way of loving, This is not the way of loving;"

Performers: Lead singer intends to expand this verse line to convey its fullness of meaning.

Audience: ecstatic disciple continues his movements with increasing intensity.

Rab   jā - ga - tə hai

Song Text: "God is awake:"

Performers: Lead performer intends to illuminate the poignant message of this text phrase by inserting a *girah* (thematically related verse) in classical persian, directed especially to the literary visitor and his ability to respond with a generous offering
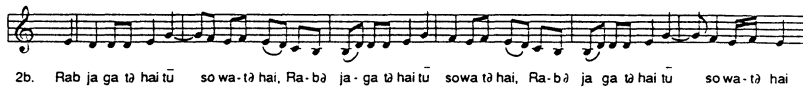
Audience: Ecstatic disciple, turned away from performers, becomes still instantly.

A dab - e - ju nūn - e - ul - fat   yeh ma qām - e

Song Text: "The wondrous emotion of longing ..."

Performers: Interrupts flow of verse to insert the Persian *girah* in a high-pitched recitative

Audience: Senior Sufi, with a movement of his hand, immediately signals to performers to stop the *girah* and return to the concluding portion of the verse of the song, in order to provide the aroused (but poor) ecstatic disciple with the song phrase that inspires his ecstasy, as follows:

2b.   Rab ja ga tə hai tū   so wa - tə hai. Ra - bə   ja - ga tə hai tū   sowa tə hai, Ra - bə   ja ga tə hai tū   so wa - tə hai

Song Text: "God is awake yet you are asleep, God is awake yet you are asleep, God is awake yet you are asleep"

Performers: Lead singer instantly obeys senior Sufi, cutting off the *girah*, and returns to repeating the final segment of the verse of the song; the generous offering does not materialize.

Audience: ecstatic disciple just as instantly turns round toward the performers and breaks into loud weeping. During more repetitions of this phrase, he rises and breaks into the dance of ecstasy, transforming both the gathering and the song.

by all participants who use music as a language with extra-musical meaning built
into the sound structure.

Encounter 2. Ghazal Music: Contextualizing Poetry

In India, salient words have for centuries been preserved in memories, authen-
ticated by written texts that serve as reminders and models for sounded articu-
lation. The specific style of singing or recitation is what creates the immediate
experience of a text and its meaning, placing it within time. Thus a musical genre
which is specific to an occasion (of performance) is what turns a poem into a
performance appropriate for a particular situation. Such a musical setting
socializes the text by adding a "context-specific" *musical* message to its
"context-neutral" *verbal* message. Put in another way, the style of the musical
setting renders the message of the text situation-specific.

Perhaps the best-loved and most widely performed poetic genre in the realm
of North Indian music is the Urdu *ghazal*. With its highly formalized and
metaphoric couplets, the *ghazal* conveys thought and personal experience, and
above all, that of love. *Ghazals* are traditionally heard in widely different
performance situations which differ in function and type of participants from
poetic symposia to salon concerts and also include films. These differences are
all the more striking in the face of conformity to the traditional rules for
preserving the formal integrity of the poetic structure. The shared compositional
features of form and rhythm follow the familiar process of verbal form dictating
the parameters of musical form. But to understand the unique musical character
of each genre presupposes an appreciation of its particular performance situation
and function. This becomes particularly evident when the same poem is per-
formed in two different performance contexts.

Examples 2 and 3 show the same poetic stanza set in two different vocal
genres. The first setting represents the genre *tarannum*, the poetic chant per-
formed by poets when presenting their own works to an audience of literati. The
formal occasion for such poetic performances is the *musha'ira*, a major cultural
institution in the urban centres of North India, Pakistan, and, today, in the
expatriate communities of the Middle East, Europe, and North America. The
poet's goal is to obtain the approbation of a discriminating audience of seasoned
poetry lovers. Here, music serves the performer to articulate and reinforce the
verbal message and to allow for declamatory freedom, with the goal of intensi-
fying the listeners' positive literary experience and obtaining their approbation.
The melody reinforces the poetic structure by musically simple means, support-
ing the primary task of projecting the work and the poet's feeling.

Example 2: Poetic chant (tarannum): situating poetry in the literary assembly

Ghazal Verse (by Shamim Jaipuri set in poetic meter mujtass):

   u -   u- / u u -   -/u - u / - - -   (verse meter)
1. Zamin pe rah ke dimāgh *āsmān se miltā hai*   (rhyme scheme underlined)
2. Kabhī yeh sar jo tere *āstān se miltā hai*

1. While I live on earth my thoughts reach Heaven
2. This happens whenever I place my brow upon your threshold.

Musical Setting (anonymous, probably used by Shamim Jaipuri):

Example 2 shows the opening stanza of a *ghazal* by Shamim Jaipuri, a poet well-known for his poetic contributions to Hindi films. The musical setting is a typical *tarannum* tune for a poem built on a much-used prosodic meter. Strict metric-structural conformity to the text is combined with a simple melody which, like many such tunes, makes use of one or two elementary phrases from the popular raga *des* used in light classical music. *Tarannum* tunes, whether created or borrowed, may evoke the artful expressive connotations of classical music. But they must do so within the functional constraints of projecting the poetic text, for poets who recite to highly melodious tunes are censured as "singers."

The same raga, but more fully developed, is used in Example 3, which exemplifies the *ghazal* art song. In this genre of light classical music, melody takes pre-eminence, and both the *raga* and *tala*—the melodic and rhythmic resources of Indian art music—are used to enhance the poem. The traditional performers of *ghazal* songs are highly professional musicians: a courtesan singer with her male accompanist, entertaining male elite patrons. As in *tarannum*, the musical setting here articulates and reinforces the text message; but in addition melodic elaboration, instrumental accompaniment, and rhythmic play between declamatory recitative and musical meter create a mood of effusive emotion. In performance, these rich musical resources serve the singer to enhance the

affective meaning of the poem and to offer herself musically as the target of that affect, for the poetry speaks as a lover does to a beloved. This is a music with an eroticized aesthetic mirrored quite directly in the emotional qualities associated with the ragas that are favoured for such light classical genres, raga *des* among them.

Example 3 attempts to convey the rich musical idiom of the *ghazal* art song in a performance by the greatest twentieth century *ghazal* singer, the late Begum Akhtar. Here the same Shamim Jaipuri *ghazal* is given a multi-dimensional musical interpretation. While the recording is commercial, chosen to make the music accessible to the reader, it closely reflects live performance, notwithstanding the more varied studio instrumentation. Recording sessions of great artists like Begum Akhtar were in fact carried out as intimate private recitals for connoisseurs invited by the manager of the recording company to create the appropriate ambiance for the performer.[31] In the interest of clarity, the transcription that follows only conveys the major musical dimensions and, hence, omits some of the heterophonic melodic accompaniment.

As compared to the simple personal chant of the poet, the professionalized musical art form of the *ghazal* song has a more complex array of distinctive musical features which convey a greater range of contextual signification. Through its genre-specific "style" music, in each of the two genres, renders verbal texts contextual and thereby situational. For it is the musical setting that acoustically and physically inserts the poetic structure and content into the social process of performance.

Encounter 3. Raga Improvisation as Social Process

Performing Hindustani raga music teaches the delights of social content in India's improvisational music *par excellence*. This complex, discursive melodic and rhythmic system with its own aesthetic is normally (and appropriately) conceived of and represented as self-contained "absolute" music. Developed with reference to classical Hindu aesthetics, raga theory offers melodic rules which master musicians expound by means of a dialectical method of juxtaposing tonal distinctions between ragas (*rag tolna*). Raga pitch units and the rules for their combination have appropriately been likened to the structure and procedure of language, while each sonic realization of a raga represents a unique

31 Gajanand Rao Joshi, for many years in charge of classical recordings for HMV, writes of this in *Down Memory Lane* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1984), see especially "Malika-e-Ghazal—Begum Akhtar," 67–73.

Example 3: Ghazal Art Song: Situating Poetry in a Salon Concert

Poem by Shamim Jaipuri (as in Example 2)

Musical Setting by Begum Akhtar:
transcribed from Polydor 2392837, B1, along with instrumental accompaniment:
tamburā (T): continuously plucked drone strings
sārangī/clarinet: follow vocal melody, notated where audible
tabla: dāyān (right hand drum): pitched to tonic
bāyān (left hand drum): pitches approximate

original tonic: a
time cycle: dadra (transcribed as 6/8)

♪ = m.m104

A_____ 1.Zamin pe rah_____ ke da magh ā sə man   se mil__ ta hai_____

sarangi/clarinet
(s)   (s)   (s)   (s)

tambura   l.h.
              tabla (tacet)

♪ = 108

1. Zamin pe   rah   ke damāgh   ā - sə- man   se mil - tā hai___

(s)   (s)   (s)

r.h.
l.h.

♪ = 138

1. Zamīn   pe   rah_____ ke damagh

(c)

// //

unclear, recording damaged

Example 3: *(concluded)*

utterance, or improvisation, related to the raga "norm" in much the way that speech relates to language.[32]

Aesthetic-spiritual meaning is embedded in the totality of a raga's tonal and motivic elements and relationships, its "face" (*rup* or *Shakl*). In performance, that meaning is articulated through these tonal relationships. But what theorists, including those invoking language analogies tend to leave out is the possibility that the performance situation also contributes to the creation and exchange of musical meaning. Examining raga improvisation from the vantage point of the uniqueness of each performance event raises several questions: what happens to the pre-conceived, generalized meaning of a raga in the spontaneous creative situation of a particular performance; what motivates improvisation; what is the difference between performances of the same raga; and, what makes each performance unique?

The performing and listening experience itself alerts the musical participant to the social dimension of musical meaning. The musicians who create raga utterances improvisationally are (and they must be) musically sensitive to the totality of their context of performance. When performed in its traditional setting among connoisseurs, the aesthetically grounded interaction among tones is clearly mediated by socially grounded interaction among participants in a creative musical process, which includes the musicians as well as their patrons and listeners. Spontaneous and unique to each situation, this interaction articulates patterns of deep social relevance. Most broadly discernible is the dynamic of dominance and its corollary, subordination, which takes place between patrons and musicians, audience and performers, and between musicians, where it governs relationships between soloists and accompanists, and between melody and rhythm. Finally, musicians improvise ragas by not only following artistic convention, but also through individual contests in which artistic excellence is asserted in order to gain approbation, both musical and personal.

The ideal settings for such interactions, which will be played out musically, are traditional privately-sponsored performances involving musicians of hereditary background who share in the traditional patron-client relationship with their audiences. The soloist or lead performer is in charge of the musical performance, chooses the raga and genre, and controls the accompanists, including their solo opportunities. Musical and social dominance blend in the relationship of the lead

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32 The analogy with the *langue-parole* (language vs. speech) concept of structural linguistics has been insightfully made by Harold Powers, see his "The Structure of Musical Meaning: A View from Banares (A Metamodel for Milton)," *Perspectives of New Music* (1977): 308–34; and "India, Subcontinent of," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 9:69–143.

musician who creates melody – vocal or instrumental – and the accompanist who creates rhythm through drumming, since rhythm is conceptually subordinate to melody. A further hierarchic distinction arises from the conceptual supremacy of vocal over instrumental melody and, thus, of vocalist over instrumentalist. This distinction is played out in the convention of imitative and heterophonic melodic accompaniment for singers provided on the bowed sarangi, the traditional accompanying instrument *par excellence*. The hereditary sarangi player and his identification with this instrument most immediately bears the negative social identity of this subordination, impeding his progress into the ranks of solo performers until today.

These relationships among performers are part of the structural foundation for every performance. But as the music is being created spontaneously, musicians also define themselves as individuals *vis à vis* their role in the performing ensemble during the collective improvisational process – dominating and submitting to, but also contesting, dominance. Hereditary musicians identify this process of mutual assertion as a contest (*muqabila*) and the performing arena as a battlefield or duelling ground (*maidan*).

Overarching all this, however, is the relationship between musician and audience, or, in terms of traditional North Indian art music practice, between clients and patrons. As part of an earlier feudal tradition of cultural patronage, musicians stood at an unbridgeable social distance, yet in a very close relationship of personal service to their patrons, providing the musical expertise indispensable for executing the noble connoisseur's musical wishes. In this unique interplay of building the musical event, the musician strives to adapt the performance to the listener's wishes, but in doing so, the musician not only builds the musical event, but also thereby assumes a momentary control over the audience. As the musician succeeds in mirroring, through music, the dominant status of a patron, success is validated by rewards. The meaning of royal gifts to musicians is an acknowledgement of the musician's mastery and gift of music.

Musically, this duality of service and mastery, submission and dominance, is built into the improvisational edifice of a raga. The lead performer asserts both style and competence, imposes a conception using the weight of the existing canon but the performer also responds to, even anticipates with sensitivity, the personal stylistic or connotational preferences of listeners. Their visible and audible approbation guide the performance and influence the performer's creative personality, mediating canonical knowledge.

In today's public concert settings which separate performers and listeners both physically and relationally, interaction continues to happen, although there is a strong trend among today's increasingly middle-class musicians to offer "pure" music, unadulterated by what they see as artistically demeaning social considera-

tions.[33] Several young hereditary musicians, on the other hand, are continuing the interactional performing style handed down in their families, even before audiences in the West.[34] Another trend is for the soloist to concentrate the interactional focus toward the accompanists in a formalized version of musical contest. Most often this takes the form of a musical repartee with the tabla player in an imitative pattern known as "question-answer" (saval javab).

Nothing less than an entire performance can illustrate this wealth of social-musical interaction. Given the near-demise of the feudal concert tradition and, at the same time, its impact upon the traditional shape of the North Indian raga improvisation, I offer, in example 4, a brief recording of a master from that tradition, so as to convey at least a suggestion of how traditional raga performances are realised according to musical and situational priorities. The performance is a rare radio recording of an intimate sarangi recital by Bundu Khan, who lived the life of a concert musician of the Maharaja of Indore[35] and became a legend among music lovers in both India and Pakistan. The artist exposes the motivic units and combinatorial possibilities of the universally known raga bhairavi. Playing on a unique bamboo sarangi which he invented at the initiative of his royal patron, Bundu Khan claimed a special soloist status distinct from other sarangi players. He further reinforced his artistic stature by interpolating verbal explanations and singing the vocal models of his playing, as can be heard in the present recording transcribed in Example 4. While he thus asserts mastery over his listeners, he is also keenly alert to their reception of his patterns and elaborations. His response to them is built into his subsequent improvisation through one of the many options open to him within the wide scope but strict rules of a raga presentation.

How the flexible array of melodic possibilities are realized in this performance requires an understanding not only of raga rules but of the situational decisions that arise from the artist's interaction with the individual patrons that constitute his audience. While a detailed analysis goes beyond the scope of this article, the recording makes audible how certain melodic phrases are reiterated in answer to audible responses by individual audience members.

How a multiple social dynamic is "played out" in music is a complex but remarkably audible process, suggesting that improvisation, even in art music, serves social as well as aesthetic goals. More specifically, it may be possible that,

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33 Vamanrao Deshpande eloquently articulates this position vis-à-vis a hereditary master in "Patiala and Bade Gulam Ali Khan," in his Indian Musical Traditions: An Aesthetic Study of the Gharanas in Hindustani Music (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1987): 53–66.

34 One is the young sitarist Shujaat Khan, son of the great sitarist Vilayat Khan.

35 The EMI recording comes from the archives of Radio Pakistan.

Example 4: Building Raga Darbar: a musical-social process

Sarangi Performance by Bundu Khan, sarangi
(transcribed from EMI LKDE 20004:A2; tabla part is omitted)
Salient phrases of Raga Darbari are identified (brackets) and audible responses by
audience (A) and performer (P) are incorporated into the transcription.

original tonic: c#
time cycle: tintal (transcribed as 4 measures of 4/4; x = 1 (sam), o = beat 9 of cycle)

Example 4: *(concluded)*

as a musical strategy, improvisation is linked to the music maker's dependent position within a hierarchical, but also ultimately negotiable, social structure.

Encounter 4. Musical Canons: The Socio-Political Dimensions

This encounter raises the issue of context in relation to the normative framework of theory and history that undergird North Indian art music. There is an obvious dissonance between the centuries-old scriptural canon of Hindu Brahminical scholarship (in Sanskrit) and the oral tradition of the hereditary Muslim musicians who have dominated musical practice for about two centuries. This offers a challenge to the synthesizing agenda of musical scholarship to deal with the impact of differing religious-cultural norms (essentially Hindu and Muslim) together with opposite social milieus (high-status Brahmins vs. low-status Mirasi service professionals).[36] Comparing the two also brings into relief the difference in function between the two bodies of musical knowledge. The first one forms part of the cultural superstructure (Brahmin, priestly) and thus validates elite values and the other serves to buttress musical practice by having musicians serve Muslim feudal masters.

In studying the content of treatises, one may easily ignore their social-historical context, especially where the treatises harmonize with the dominant cultural canon. For the ancient Sanskrit lineage of Indian treatises this canon is of course Hindu philosophy and aesthetics; it underlies the foundational thriteenth-

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36 Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, "Whose Music?" in *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music*, 152–68.

century treatise *Sangita Ratnakara* which subsequent treatises have emulated in format and substance.[37]

Muslim rule brought a different cultural canon enshrined in Arabic and Persian and written in Arab-Persian script. Therefore, Muslim efforts to extend their cultural hegemony to sangit, a complex process yet to be unravelled by scholarship, required both the translation of inaccessible Sanskrit texts and their adaptation into the Muslim cultural-ideational frame. The resulting synthesising efforts are contained in a series of music treatises that constitute parallels to their Sanskrit counterparts. These works were written from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries,[38] by and for members of the Muslim elite who were dominant in North India until British rule. Their language is mostly Persian, the court language of Northern India, followed by several treatises in Urdu, which replaced Persian in the nineteenth century.

Because of their obvious syncretic character, these musical treatises show very clearly that social-ideological function can be paramount even in specialized technical writings that are legitimately considered sources of purely musical information by musicologists and music theorists. To convey a sense of this contextual richness, example 5 offers a content summary of the major nineteenth century treatise *Ma'dan-ul-Mansiqi* ("Mine of Music").[39] Like its Persian predecessors, this work follows the seven-chapter model of the foundational *Sangita Ratnakana*,[40] but with telling modifications, which become obvious when the two outlines are juxtaposed, as is shown in example 5. *Sangita Ratnakana* begins with a consideration of sound, then moves on to the melodic system (raga), performing practice, and vocal compositions, followed by the rhythmic system (tala), instruments and their specific compositions, and, finally, dance. Throughout, explications of musical theory and process make reference to Hindu cosmology, spiritual origins, and specifically to Hindu cultural forms and materials, from gods and sages to Sanskrit prosody.

A review of *Ma'dan-ul-Mausiqi* ("Mine of Music"), shows that its author

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37 See also the discussion in Harold Powers, "India, Subcontinent of," *New Grove* 9:69–143.

38 For a review of this body of works see Najma Parveen Ahmad, *Hindustani Music: Study of its Development in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Gandhi Nagar, Delhi: Ramesh Jain Manohar Publications, 1984).

39 Hakim Muhammad Karam Iman, *Ma'dan-ul-Mausiqi*, MS dated 1856 (Lucknow: Hindustani Press, 1925); and "Ma'danu'l – Mausiqi," translated in part by Govind Vidyarthia under the title "Melody through Centuries," in *Sangeet Natak Akademi Bulletin* 11, no. 12 (1959–60): 6–14, 13–26, 30, 49.

40 For a brief description, see Powers, "India," in *New Grove*; for a partial translation of vol. 1, see Shringy and Sharma, *Sangita Ratnakara of Sarngadeva*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978).

follows the Sanskrit model in both format and substance. At the same time, the work is adapted to the Muslim cultural meaning system which differs drastically both in its Islamic ideation and West Asian linguistic-regional origin. This difference is also manifest in nineteenth-century musical practice to which the treatise makes reference, which was dominated by Muslim court patronage and court musicians. The result is an amalgam that contains substantial Muslim accretions and re-interpretations which surround and add to music theory that is being presented. The foundational opening chapter and the second chapter covering raga, are essentially left intact as compilation of Hindu theory and sanctioned practice, corresponding to the Sanskrit model.

Specific discussion of ragas and styles from Muslim practice is inserted into the third chapter that deals with performance practice, whereas on the ideational plane an alternative melodic system of Muslim cultural origin is introduced in a separate chapter (chapter 5), with the aim of showing confluences between Indian and Persian-Arabic modal theory. So as to remain within the seven chapter limit, the original chapter 4, on vocal composition, has been deleted entirely, and so has its discussion of Sanskrit songs and meters. Instead, a section on Persian-Urdu poetic meters has been added to the chapter on tala, thus retaining the idea of prosody's relevance to musical meter, but relegating its discussion to an appendage of meter, rather than an introduction to it, as is the case in *Sangita Ratnakana*. This substitution also reflects the profoundly different linguistic-literary orientation of traditional Indian-Muslim culture.

A further indication of different musical-social priorities is found in the positioning of the dance chapter immediately following the chapter on rhythm, since for Muslims dance lacks the independent significance of a medium for divine representation.[41] Finally, musical instruments are discussed without the systematic organological framework of the Sanskrit treatises;[42] instead, they form part of an eclectic final chapter conveying foundational narratives about musical instruments and legendary music makers.

Even this cursory comparative glance shows that in *Ma'dan-ul-Mausiqi*, ancient Sanskrit models and contemporary Muslim practice are united by means of a parallel Muslim superstructure which manages to link Indian music along with its Hindu theoretical foundation to a Persian-Muslim frame of musical

41 Precisely this difference is embodied in the secular courtly practice of *Kathak*, the classical dance form of North Indian music.

42 The four-fold classification system of European organology based on sound-producing agents (chordophones, aerophones, membraphones, idiophones) was, in fact, derived from Indian models; see Erich Hornbostel and Curt Sachs, "The Classification of Musical Instruments," *Galpin Society Journal* 14 (1961): 3–29.

Example 5: Muslim adaptation of Sanskrit model treatise

Sangita Ratnakara	**Ma'dan-ul-Mausiqi**
(Sanskrit, 13th Century)	(Urdu, 19th Century)
Ch 1 Sound System	Sound System
Ch 2 Raga	Raga
Ch 3 Performing Practice	Raga (including Muslim ragas and performing practice)
Ch 4 Compositions	(vocal, incl. Tala (including Arab-Persian metric system)
poetic meter)	
Ch 5 Tala	Dance
Ch 6 Instruments	Maqam (Persian Modal System)
Ch 7 Dance	Historical Narratives of instruments and musicians.

thinking, thereby integrating musical information and social function in a highly visible way.

Conclusion

Collectively, what these examples of one ethnomusicologist's engagement with India illustrate is the variety of connections between the social and the musical that permeate India's complex musical landscape, including its art music. Admittedly, some of these cross-culturally generated insights make points that may appear simplistic to the culturally-internal musicologist who does research on historical or theoretical questions about music. Indeed, this applies as much to the musicologist within India who does highly specialized research;[43] but the agenda and conceptions of Indian musicology clearly differs from its Western counterpart, sometimes to the point of mutual unintelligibility, English texts notwithstanding. Beyond useful attempts to explicate the semantics of its English usage,[44] the scope of musicology in India has remained a curious blind

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43 For a cross-section of the well-established Indian research tradition, see, amongst numerous other publications, the *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society* and the *Indian Music Journal*.

44 Harold Powers, "Indian Music and the English Language: A Review Essay," *Ethnomusicology* 9, no. 1 (1965): 1–12; and Bonnie C. Wade, "A Guide to Source Materials: Bibliography," in *Music in India: The Classical Traditions*, Prentice-Hall History of Music Series (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 213-20.

spot in the Western scholarship on Indian music. This fact itself inevitably points to the need to examine not only music but musicology from a socially and politically grounded perspective. For the body of contemporary Indian musico-logical writing represents India's own national and regional priorities which constitute a social context of music in the widest sense. They offer an important key for understanding how, out of a commitment to cultural nationalism, a modern musical canon is being built with reference to its Brahminical heritage and its diverse historical sources, while at the same time music is being situated in a Western-derived scholarly and institutional framework.

South Asia offers ample musical ground to substantiate powerful social claims for music formulated earlier. The key to understanding the multiple significance of this region's rich musical processes is a perspective that is socially aware even when it is musically sophisticated. I believe that such a perspective can fruitfully encompass all kinds of music and inhabit any kind of musicology, whatever its disciplinal moorings or its label. By bringing a socially-grounded approach to the study of complex musical traditions, ethnomusicologists complement the essen-tially sound-centered approach that characterizes the classical musicologies of Western as well as of non-Western art music.[45] Focusing on the social relevance of these musical systems will not only expand their musicologies but it will also enable music scholars to make the profound significance of music more widely understood in the discourse of area studies and wherever human societies are being explored.

Abstract

In this article, four cases of ethnomusicological research on South Asian music are presented to substantiate the social essentiality (*Wesentlichkeit*) of music, and therefore the complementary role of a socially-grounded approach to studying complex musical traditions. Historiographically, it is argued that this social orientation progresses logically from, and is in keeping with, the growing cosmopolitan reality of musical scholarship and of music itself. Ethnomusicology draws resourcefully from its rich, inter-disciplinary heritage of musicology, music theory, anthropology, and area studies to yield tools of musical description and analysis that are culturally appropriate, culture-specific and yet cross-cultural, this paving a foundation for a truly comparative—and "Adlerian"—musicology.

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45 The rich tradition of Chinese musical scholarship offers a strong case in point.